

# Field Report

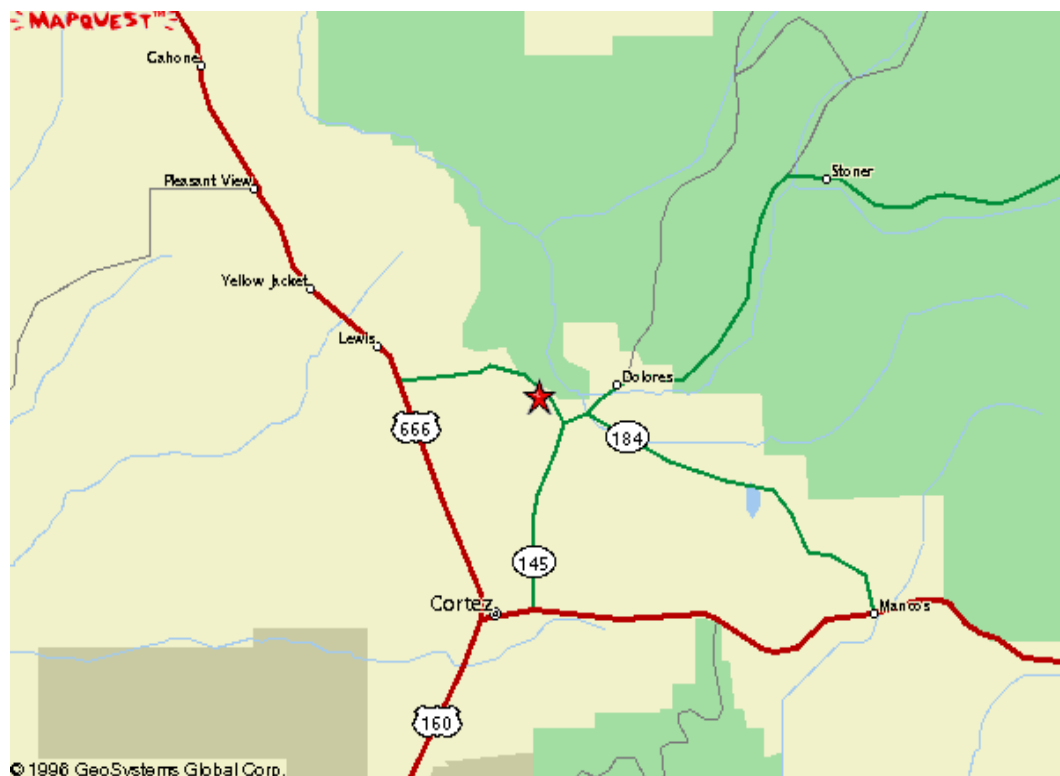
## Anasazi Heritage Center

### ■ 1.0 Summary

The Anasazi Heritage Center (AHC) is a BLM-managed site that contains a museum, artifact cataloging and storage space, and prehistoric pueblos. The site is located in southwestern Colorado, three miles west of the town of Dolores, Colorado and 10 miles northwest of Cortez, Colorado. The AHC is 17 miles north of Mesa Verde National Park.

No potential Alternative Transportation System (ATS) needs have been identified for this site.

**Figure 1. Anasazi Heritage Center Area Map**



## ■ 2.0 Background Information

### 2.1 Location

The Anasazi Heritage Center (AHC) is located in southwestern Colorado, off of Highway 184 three miles west of the town of Dolores and 10 miles northwest of the city of Cortez. The AHC is 17 miles north of Mesa Verde National Park.

### 2.2 Administration and Classification

The Anasazi Heritage Center (AHC) is a museum and an archeological site operated by the BLM. The AHC is a designated federal repository for artifacts and continues to receive materials from other legitimate excavations on public land in the region. The BLM state director is Ann Morgan and the director of the AHC is Lou Ann Jacobson.

### 2.3 Physical Description

The topography of the AHC site is generally rolling hills and mountainous. The site rests at an altitude of approximately 6,200 feet. The area is considered arid with a general rainfall of an estimated 13 inches per year. Annual average snowfall is roughly 40 inches.



The transportation facilities associated with the AHC include one driveway to/from Highway 184, a parking lot, and pedestrian trails. The lot provides parking for approximately 65 vehicles. A half-mile pedestrian trail leads to the Escalante Pueblo on AHC museum grounds. The Dominguez Pueblo is visible from the sidewalk that takes visitors between the parking lot and the building.

The pueblo-style museum was constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation as part of the McPhee Dam and Reservoir, also known as the Dolores project. The museum contains public use, administration, laboratory, and collection storage areas. Public facilities include a main exhibit hall, theater, gallery for temporary special exhibits, library, a conference

room and museum shop. The museum is also fully handicapped accessible. The site of the museum is 50 acres surrounded by private land and a reservoir.

## **2.4 Mission and Goals of the Anasazi Heritage Center**

A major goal of the Anasazi Heritage Center is to increase public awareness of archaeology, cultural resources and the Ancestral Puebloan culture. The museum's exhibits interpret these themes through artifact displays and illustrations, a pithouse replica and hands-on, interactive learning opportunities.

The following components of the AHC mission statement were developed between 1995 and 1996 and hope to promote:

- An understanding of the cultural landscape of the Four Corners in a broad context;
- An understanding of the varied human populations through time and their interaction with each other and with the resources of the land;
- Inclusive conscientious and respectful decision-making;
- An awareness of the continuity of cultural diversity in the region;
- An understanding and appreciation of the diverse patterns of living in the cultural landscape; and
- The ongoing support and good will of the community.

The AHC collections and data management programs focus on the preservation of, access to, and use of archaeological collections and archives. These programs also support and enhance the AHC.

A management plan with objectives for the AHC was developed back in 1980 but is in need of revision.

## **2.5 Visitation Levels and Visitor Profile**

Visitation levels of the museum range between 200-225 per day during peak times. When Mesa Verde is closed the museum has received as many as 300-400 visitors per day. The museum's estimated capacity for visitors is up to 70,000 per year. Visitation between April and May, due to school bus tours, is about 5,000 to 6,000 visitors. One hundred thirty-four school groups visited the AHC in 1998 and 114 did so through July of 1999. The peak season is late May through early September. The visitation then tapers off until mid-October, with lowest levels of visitation in December, January and February. See Table 1 for specific visitation counts.

The museum is open daily between 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. November through February). The museum is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. The Ruins (Pueblos) are open daily between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., weather permitting. The usual museum visitor stay is from one to four hours.

The fee schedule is based on the honor system. This system was implemented in March 1997. Admission is free for ages 17 and under and for school groups. Adults 18 and over are \$3.00 and an annual pass is \$6.00. Golden Eagle age and access passes are honored. AHC volunteers receive an annual pass after they have completed 10 hours of donated time.

Based on 1995 to 1998 data, the largest number of visitors come from the western United States (25-38 percent). The second largest draw to the museum are Coloradans from beyond the Four Corners region (19-22 percent). Other visitor origins are indicated in Table 2 below. Visitation from the western U.S. and foreign countries appears to be on the increase, while visitation from other parts of the U.S. appear to be in decline. The typical visitor is over 40 years old. Some are repeat visitors to the area who are looking for attractions other than Mesa Verde. Most summer visitors are new to the museum, while in the winter more local residents appear to take interest in the museum's rotating exhibits.

**Table 1. Anasazi Heritage Center Visitation, 1995-1999**

<b>Month</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
January	614	555	513	455	702
February	1,009	800	572	529	797
March	2,203	2,328	1,688	1,709	1,465
April	3,263	3,001	2,534	2,193	2,117
May	6,135	5,782	4,734	4,326	4,658
June	5,289	5,350	4,548	4,078	4,701
July	6,594	6,163	5,251	5,585	4,787
August	5,192	8,262	4,327	3,895	4,301
September	5,124	5,050	4,049	4,083	
October	3,829	3,267	2,421	2,898	
November	1,037	1,152	1,014	985	
December	485	732	595	564	
<b>Total Visitors</b>	<b>40,674</b>	<b>41,087</b>	<b>32,246</b>	<b>31,300</b>	

**Table 2. AHC Visitor Origin \* Based on Visitor Register Entries**

Place of Origin	Fiscal Year 1995	Fiscal Year 1997	Fiscal Year 1998
Western U.S.	25%	26.0%	38%
Central U.S.	18%	18.0%	17%
Eastern U.S.	15%	13.5%	10%
Four Corners	16%	11.0%	9%
Other Colorado (not Four Corners)	22%	24.0%	19%
Non-U.S.	4%	7.5%	7%

## ■ 3.0 Existing Conditions, Issues and Concerns

### 3.1 Transportation Conditions, Issues and Concerns

Transportation issues in the area of the AHC relate to the surrounding roadways, specifically, SH 184, SH 145, U.S. 666 and U.S. 160 these routes lie within Montezuma County, Colorado and provide access to the museum. (See Location Map).

Once on AHC grounds transportation facilities provided include a parking lot, and a half-mile paved nature trail.

#### *Signage/Mapping*

One issue identified by AHC staff include problems related to inadequate signage and mapping of the AHC. AHC staff believes that the sign on Highway 145 providing direction to the museum is too close to the left-turn lane used to turn onto Highway 184 and the AHC. In addition, many Colorado State maps currently indicate that the AHC is not only located on the wrong side of the road, but on the wrong side of the reservoir as well.

#### *Bicycling*

In Montezuma County, the town of Dolores has an existing bicycle trail along the Dolores River, as well as the Ridgeline Trail on the north side of town. State Highway 184 has at least four feet of shoulder to accommodate bicycle access to the AHC.

### ***Bridge Relocation***

A bridge crossing the Narraguinnepp Canal along SH 184 was found to be “structurally deficient” in the Southwest Colorado 2020 Transportation Plan. The bridge could potentially impact access to the AHC from the west at the intersection of SH 184 and U.S. 666.

### ***Airports***

There are two airports within 50 miles of the AHC, the Cortez-Montezuma County Airport and the Durango-La Plata County Airport. The Cortez-Montezuma County Airport is approximately 15 miles southwest of the AHC off of U.S. 160. The Durango-La Plata County Airport is 12 miles southeast of the city of Durango, and is approximately 50 miles from the AHC.

In western Colorado, aviation services have become increasingly important in maintaining and enhancing the viability of local and regional economies. In addition to direct economic impacts, (expenditures associated with airport operating costs) there are indirect impacts (visitors spending money for local goods and services e.g., the AHC) and multiplier effects (re-circulation of visitor dollars in the local economy). The Cortez-Montezuma County Airport is indicated as the major intermodal facility of the AHC area.

### ***Roads***

The major roadways that provide direct access to the AHC are State Highway 184 and State Highway 145. Other routes utilized to access SH 184 and SH 145 are U.S. 666 and U.S. 160. These roadways are generally in fair to poor condition according to the Southwest Colorado 2020 Transportation Plan. Seventy-two percent of SH 145’s 59-mile length is designated as in either fair or poor condition. SH 184 is rated in fair or poor condition for 77 percent of its length. The roadways surrounding the museum appear to be in fair to poor condition in terms of road markings, with many of the centerlines and edge indicators are faded or barely visible.

In addition, U.S. 666 is found to have approximately 99 percent of its length in fair or poor condition, and U.S. 160 has 87 percent of its length indicated in fair or poor condition. U.S. 160 and 666 would have less of an impact on AHC visitors as they are farther from the AHC site. Portions of U.S. 160 and 666, which lie south of the AHC, are proposed project locations for roadway improvements in the Southwest Colorado 2020 Transportation Plan, as well as reconstruction of SH 145 starting at Dolores and ending seven miles east of the town.

A Level of Service (LOS) for traffic map of Montezuma County from 1996 indicates no existing congestion in the vicinity of the AHC; however, the map included in the Southwest Colorado 2020 Plan indicates there may be some localized congestion in Cortez and Dolores by the year 2016.

The parking lot occasionally fills during a popular public event or on other rare occasions, such as when Mesa Verde was closed due to a fire that occurred in 1996.

### **3.2 Community Development Conditions, Issues and Concerns**

The population for Montezuma County is projected to increase by nearly 100 percent between 1990 (18,762) and 2020 (35,848). A concern identified by AHC management pertains to commercial development occurring across from the museum on SH 184. A visually unappealing metal building has already been built and several more lots are available for development. This development has the potential to negatively impact the view shed from the AHC. Even after considerable public objection, the Montezuma County Board approved the application for building permits. This development could also potentially impact access to the museum as traffic increases due to the new construction across from the AHC.

### **3.3 Natural or Cultural Resource Conditions, Issues and Concerns**

The biggest concern for the museum is access to funding to keep the museum operational and well maintained. The Escalante Pueblo stabilization became a very costly endeavor because funding was not available to maintain the site on a yearly basis. However, the site has been stabilized and a small percentage of funds will be put in reserve annually to maintain the site.

The half-mile nature trail is paved, and fully handicapped accessible. The Dominguez Pueblo is closest to the museum. The trail terminates at the Escalante Pueblo. The Escalante Pueblo is a rectangular block of about 28 rooms surrounding a kiva (a round subterranean room probably used for religious purposes). The Dominguez Pueblo is a small structure that sits at the base of a hill below the Escalante Pueblo. The condition of this trail ranges from good to excellent.

### **3.4 Recreation Conditions, Issues and Concerns**

The AHC's close proximity to Mesa Verde is usually a positive draw for visitors to the museum; however, when Mesa Verde is closed, which does not occur frequently, the museum parking lot has been known to fill up and receive more visitors than it can handle. Otherwise no notable issues or concerns exist that relate to recreational conditions.

## **■ 4.0 Planning and Coordination**

### **4.1 Unit Plans**

A new management plan for AHC needs to be developed. The last management plan was published in 1980 and is now outdated.

## 4.2 Public and Agency Coordination

New development across the road from the AHC could negatively impact traffic conditions for vehicles entering AHC grounds. The Montezuma County Board, and the AHC Management, along with associated state and federal agencies, need to work together to determine what is best for the AHC and the community as a whole. The development of a new management plan for the AHC and the surrounding area would enhance this effort.

## ■ 5.0 Assessment of Need

### 5.1 Magnitude of Need

The magnitude of need for transit alternatives to be provided to AHC visitors is negligible. Parking presently provided is generally adequate. Crowding is not a major concern. Therefore, no transit alternatives have been studied, as the need has not been identified for them at the AHC.

Visitation to the museum declined between 1995 and 1998. Even with high estimates for visitation taken into consideration, the museum would be likely to accommodate its maximum annual capacity of 70,000 visitors in the year 2020.

In the future, a potential link between Mesa Verde and AHC could be established by transit routes, as the need arises. Today, however, transit to the AHC is neither necessary nor feasible.

## ■ 6.0 Bibliography

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## ■ 7.0 Persons Interviewed

Hal Sheppard, City Manager, City of Cortez. August 16, 1999

Lou Ann Jacobson. August 16, 1999